

PRIORITIZING THE NINE CHALLENGES OF MALAYSIAN VISION 2020

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ABSTRACT

The exotic phrase “Vision 2020” has been coined to signify a lofty and long term objective pertaining to some issue in many countries across the world. In Malaysia, the architect of this vision is the former Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, who unveiled it in 1991, 30 years in advance of the time line of demarcation. The gist of the Malaysian Vision 2020 is that “By the year 2020, Malaysia will become a developed nation.” In course of this long, arduous and turbulence full journey, the nation needs to address the nine strategic challenges: (1) Establishing a united Malaysian nation, (2) Creating a psychologically liberated, secure, and developed Malaysian society, (3) Developing a mature democratic society, (4) Forming a community that has high morale, ethics, and religious strength, (5) Establishing a mature, liberal and tolerant society, (6) Establishing a scientific and progressive society, (7) Establishing a fully caring society, (8) Ensuring an economically just society, and (9) Establishing a prosperous society. Malaysia has already made a significant progress in achieving the objectives of Vision 2020. Nonetheless, depending upon the prevailing as well as ensuing situation, a number of new action plans need to be devised and implemented before the country is declared as a developed nation. In this context, the present paper applies the Analytic Hierarchy Process to prioritize the above-mentioned nine challenges so that the country’s scarce resources can be disbursed to formulate and implement the right action plans in the remaining ten years.

Keywords: vision 2020, AHP, Malaysia

1. Introduction

Malaysia achieved her independence from the British rule in 1957. Tunku Abdul Rahman became the first Prime Minister (PM), who is also known as the Father of the Nation. But, it is Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad (fourth PM), who is widely regarded as the chief architect of the modern Malaysia. He assumed office on 16 July, 1981 and was PM until he left his office in 31 October, 2003. He is credited for the transformation of a purely agriculture-based Malaysian economy to an industrialized one. In his fourth term as PM, while delivering a lecture before the inaugural meeting of the Malaysian Business Council, dated 28 February, 1991, Tun Mahathir unveiled a lofty vision for his country, known as Vision 2020. The gist of this vision is to see Malaysia as a fully developed country by the year 2020. In fact, the Vision 2020 statement is (Rahman, 1993):

By the year 2020, Malaysia is to be a united nation, with a confident Malaysian society, infused by strong moral and ethical values, living in a society that is democratic, liberal, caring, economically just and equitable, progressive and prosperous, and in full possession of an economy that is competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient.

It is to be noted that the vision statement proposes development not just only economic sense, but the development should take place in multiple fronts. According to Tun Mahathir Mohamad (Mohamad, 1991, p.1):

Malaysia should not be developed only in the economic sense. It must be a nation that is fully developed along all the dimensions: economically, politically, socially, spiritually, psychologically and culturally. We must be fully developed in terms of national unity and social cohesion, in terms of our economy, in terms of social justice, political stability, system of government, quality of life, social and spiritual values, national pride and confidence.

Vision 2020 blueprint comprises nine strategic challenges that need to be successfully addressed in order to achieve the above-mentioned developments in multifarious fronts. Mohamad said (Mohamad, 1991, p. 1):

There can be no fully developed Malaysia until we have finally overcome the nine central strategic challenges that have confronted us from the moment of our birth as an independent nation.

Here are those nine challenges:

- C1. Establishing a united Malaysian nation made up of one *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian nation)
- C2. Creating a psychologically liberated, secure and developed Malaysian society
- C3. Fostering and developing a mature democratic society
- C4. Establishing a fully moral and ethical society
- C5. Establishing a mature, liberal and tolerant society
- C6. Establishing a scientific and progressive society
- C7. Establishing a fully caring society
- C8. Ensuring an economically just society, in which there is fair and equitable distribution of wealth of the nation
- C9. Establishing a prosperous society with an economy that is fully competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient

Are all these challenges equally critical (or important) for Vision 2020? To what extent have these challenges been addressed in the last 20 years? What have specific action plans been developed and deployed to address those challenges? We tried to investigate the answer of these questions in the existing literature. But we found scarcity of the relevant literature, especially research papers published in journals and periodicals, though few books have been written on the theme in the older days (Sarji, 1993; Yeoh, 1993).

The main objective of the present research is to investigate the answer of the first of the three above-mentioned questions, namely, 'Are all the nine strategic challenges equally critical to realize Malaysian Vision 2020?' This objective is pursued as the country's resources are limited and these scarce resources need to be used to achieve optimal results. The details of the analysis are provided in the following section.

2. Data Collection and Analysis

The necessary data for the present research were collected from 116 respondents through structured interviews upon personal contact basis. Basically, the questionnaire had two sections. In section A, they were asked to provide some personal information including gender, age, race, level of education, marital status and type of employment. A summary statistics on the respondents' background are provided in Table 1.

Malaysia is a multi-racial country and it is divided into two parts: West Malaysia and East Malaysia. West Malaysia is also known as Peninsular Malaysia and it is geographically separated from the East Malaysia. Apart from the citizens of Malaysia, a sizeable percentage of the total population are expatriates or foreign workers (named here as internationals). Table 2 presents the respondents' affiliation to various states of Malaysia as well various countries for the international respondents. Note that the majority of the respondents came from Kuala Lumpur Federal territory and the states of Selangor and Perak.

Table 1. Respondents' profile.

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Per cent
Gender		
• Male	64	55.2
• Female	52	44.8
Race		
• Malays	47	40.5
• Malaysian Chinese	20	17.2
• Malaysian Indians	21	18.1
• Others	28	24.1
Age group		
• 20 years or below	6	5.2
• 21-30 years	58	50.0
• 31-40 years	26	22.4
• 41-50 years	16	13.8
• 51 years and above	10	8.6
Highest level of education		
• O level	3	2.6
• A level	4	3.4
• Diploma	6	5.2
• Professional degree	7	6.0
• Bachelors	38	32.8
• Masters	55	47.4
• Ph.D.	3	2.6
Marital status		
• Single	54	46.6
• Married	62	53.4
Type of employment		
• Public	12	10.3
• Private	51	44.0
• Self-employed	15	12.9
• Others	38	32.8

Table 2. The statistics of the respondents across various states of Malaysia and the world.

State	Malaysian		International		
	No. of respondents	Country	No. of respondents	Country	No. of respondents
Johor	8	Bangladesh	3	Syria	1
Kedah	3	Bosnia	4	Saudi Arabia	1
Kelantan	3	Comoros	1	Tajikistan	1
Kuala Lumpur	28	Egypt	2	Yemen	1
Melaka	1	Philippines	2		
Negeri Sembilan	3	India	1		
Pahang	4	Indonesia	3		
Penang	6	Kenya	1		
Perak	12	Malawi	1		
Perlis	1	Maldives	1		
Selangor	17	Palestine	2		
Terengganu	1	Sri Lanka	1		

The second part of the questionnaire was a blank 9×9 AHP pairwise comparison matrix. Firstly, the respondents were briefed about the AHP and the (1-9) scale (Saaty, 1980). Next the respondents were asked the typical questions on pairwise comparison for those nine challenges. Altogether there were 36 pairwise questions while each question had two parts – which one of the two challenges was more important to address Vision 2020 and how much more. The researcher himself filled up the PCM while soliciting the responses. Average time spent with a respondent is 20 minutes.

After collecting the responses from all the 116 respondents, the individual PCMs were aggregated using the geometric mean procedure of AHP. Basically, two aggregation methods exist in the literature, namely interval (Arbel, 1990; Islam *et al.*, 1997) and geometric mean (Basak and Saaty, 1993; Saaty and Peniwati, 2007). The latter method was used in the present study. Microsoft Excel was used to calculate the geometric means of the individual judgments, whereas Expert Choice 2000 was used to calculate the priorities of the challenges. The aggregated PCM along with the priorities have been shown in Tables 3.

Table 3. Aggregated pairwise comparison matrix.

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	Pty
C1	1	1	1	0.50	1	0.87	0.80	0.43	0.56	0.080
C2		1	1.38	0.63	1	1.14	1	0.40	0.50	0.089
C3			1	0.57	0.80	0.83	0.75	0.44	0.43	0.074
C4				1	1.56	1.29	1.33	0.67	0.67	0.131
C5					1	1	1	0.50	0.56	0.089
C6						1	1.17	0.50	0.63	0.094
C7							1	0.71	0.75	0.100
C8								1	1.33	0.185
C9									1	0.157

The priorities of the nine challenges have also been determined for the three major races and international respondents separately. The aggregated PCMs along with the priorities of the challenges are shown in Exhibit 1. On the basis of the priorities, ranks of the challenges are obtained which are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Overall and race-based ranks of the nine challenges.

	Ranks assigned by				Overall
	Malays	Chinese	Indians	Internationals	
C1	8	6	8	7	8
C2	4	7	7	6	6
C3	9	9	9	9	9
C4	3	4	4	2	3
C5	5	8	5	8	7
C6	7	3	6	4	5
C7	6	5	3	5	4
C8	1	1	1	1	1
C9	2	2	2	3	2

Exhibit 1. Aggregated pairwise comparison matrices based upon individual races.

Malays										
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	Pty
C1	1	0.83	1.40	0.50	0.80	1	0.78	0.40	0.50	0.079
C2		1	2	0.67	1	1.50	1	0.50	0.60	0.103
C3			1	0.67	0.86	1	0.75	0.50	0.50	0.075
C4				1	1.67	1.40	1.50	0.86	0.86	0.140
C5					1	1.38	1.50	0.50	0.60	0.100
C6						1	1.14	0.50	0.63	0.085
C7							1	0.80	0.78	0.098
C8								1	1.20	0.171
C9									1	0.149
CR = 0.01										
Malaysian Indians										
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	Pty
C1	1	1.25	0.80	0.50	1	0.67	0.86	0.50	0.44	0.078
C2		1	1	0.78	1	1	0.75	0.40	0.50	0.080
C3			1	0.50	0.50	0.67	0.60	0.40	0.40	0.068
C4				1	1.25	1.28	0.83	0.63	0.33	0.115
C5					1	1.20	0.71	0.56	0.67	0.097
C6						1	0.75	0.50	0.50	0.090
C7							1	0.83	1	0.120
C8								1	1.50	0.179
C9									1	0.173
CR = 0.02										

Malaysian Chinese										
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	Pty
C1	1	1.33	1	0.60	1.14	0.75	0.75	0.50	0.67	0.087
C2		1	1.17	0.75	1.33	0.89	0.89	0.40	0.40	0.083
C3			1	0.60	0.71	0.63	1	0.37	0.40	0.072
C4				1	1.25	0.71	1.22	0.43	0.50	0.104
C5					1	0.60	1	0.44	0.50	0.081
C6						1	1.71	0.75	0.71	0.126
C7							1	0.60	0.57	0.090
C8								1	1.25	0.189
C9									1	0.169
CR = 0.01										
Internationals										
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	Pty
C1	1	1	1.22	0.44	1	1	1	0.50	0.67	0.087
C2		1	1.12	0.50	1.14	1	1.40	0.33	0.57	0.087
C3			1	0.50	1	0.89	0.87	0.50	0.43	0.077
C4				1	1.83	1.80	1.62	0.83	1	0.159
C5					1	0.75	0.80	0.50	0.50	0.079
C6						1	1.33	0.50	0.78	0.096
C7							1	0.60	0.67	0.088
C8								1	1.33	0.182
C9									1	0.145
CR = 0.01										

Following are some of the observations on the ranks shown in Table 4.

- On the basis of the overall ranks, the nine challenges of Malaysian Vision 2020 are arranged according to their order of importance:
 - C8. Ensuring an economically just society, in which there is fair and equitable distribution of wealth of the nation
 - C9. Establishing a prosperous society with an economy that is fully competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient
 - C4. Establishing a fully moral and ethical society
 - C7. Establishing a fully caring society
 - C6. Establishing a scientific and progressive society
 - C2. Creating a psychologically liberated, secure and developed Malaysian society
 - C5. Establishing a mature, liberal and tolerant society
 - C1. Establishing a united Malaysian nation made up of one *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian nation)
 - C3. Fostering and developing a mature democratic society

From the above arrangement we observe that to realize the objectives of Vision 2020, firstly people have emphasized on strong economy followed by morally upright and scientifically advanced society.

- Challenges 8 and 3 have been considered as the most and least important challenge by all the races¹, respectively.
- Challenge 9 has been assigned rank 2 by all the three major Malaysian races.
- Surprisingly, the challenge of ‘Establishing a united Malaysian nation’ has not been assigned high priority by the various races; Malays and Indians have assigned rank 8, whereas the Chinese have assigned the rank 6. This is surprising as the present government has put considerable emphasis on this by promoting the 1Malaysia concept among the populace (Lim, 2009). As pointed out before, people have placed equitable distribution of wealth, robust economy, moral, ethical and caring society, scientific and technological knowledge, ahead of establishing a united Malaysian nation.

Apparently, the ranks assigned by various races look very similar. Spearman’s rank correlation coefficients (RCCs) for various pairs of races are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Rank correlation coefficients for various races.

	Malays	Chinese	Indians	Int’ls
Malay	1.000	.667*	.833**	.783*
Chinese		1.000	.783*	.933**
Indians			1.000	.800**
Int’ls				1.000

* Correlation is significant at the 5% level.

** Correlation is significant at the 1% level

All the RCCs are significant at 5% significance level, i.e., the races do not differ significantly in assigning importance level to the challenges. The highest RCC has been observed for Chinese and Internationals (0.933) following by Malays and Indians (0.833) – both are significant at 1% level.

¹ The term ‘races’ includes internationals as well.

2. Conclusions

In order to become a developed nation by the year 2020, Malaysian state governments in tandem with the country's federal government must address the issue of equitable distribution of wealth in the country. In fact, from the very beginning, the federal government has taken several measures to reduce the income inequality, one such measure is NEP or National Economic Policy. Despite its existence for the last four decades, still significant income inequality exists in the country. Therefore, some new measures need to be taken to bridge the gap further. Present Malaysian government has also implemented a pragmatic, ambitious and comprehensive plan, called Economic Transformation Plan or ETP to build a high income nation by the year 2020. This initiative is expected to help address the second most critical challenge of establishing an economically sound and solvent society. Having addressed these two challenges, the government should devise proper action plans to address other challenges.

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